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ABSTRACT

Leadership training and recognition of leadership skills have been a cornerstone of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) since its inception. To determine if certain personality characteristics are associated with individuals who hold leadership positions and if the level of leadership reflects particular personality traits, 147 FFA chapter and state officers from across the United States who attended leadership conferences at the National FFA Center in Alexandria, Virginia, during the summer of 1976 were sampled. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was utilized to assess personality traits of the FFA officers and describe the behavioral correlates associated with each dimension of personality based on Jung's Typology. Results indicated that FFA officers are more often classified as: (1) extroverted rather than introverted--preferring public contact and dealings with people over paper work; (2) sensing rather than intuitive--accomplishing immediate tasks with attention to detail and routine; (3) feeling rather than thinking--using tact when handling people; and (4) judging rather than perceptive--working well within a structured system. An FFA chapter officer differed from a state president in only the sensing-intuitive dimension; 74% of chapter officers were classified as sensing as compared with 50% of state presidents. The information gained should be considered in improvement FFA leadership training programs and advisement functions. (NEC)

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FFA LEADERS: PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP STYLE[1]

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine the personality traits held by both chapter and state officers in the Future Farmers of America (FFA). 147 officers from across the United States who attended leadership conferences at the National FFA Center in Alexandria, Virginia, during the summer of 1976, were sampled. To assess personality traits of these FFA officers, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was utilized. The MBTI describes the behavioral correlates associated with each dimension of personality based on Jung's Typology. Specifically, this study has indicated that FFA officers are more often classified as:

1) extraverted rather than introverted,
2) sensing rather than intuitive
3) feeling rather than thinking
4) judging rather than perceptive

An FFA chapter officer differed from a state officer on only one of the four main dimensions, sensing - intuitive. A higher proportion of chapter officers were classified as sensing than were state officers.

This sample of FFA officers definitely represents youth coming from a rural background. Most have grown up on a farm. They represent the rural leaders of tomorrow.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Significance of Problem.....3

Review of Literature.....4

Statement of Problem.....9

Methodology.....9

Population.....9

Instrumentation.....9

Results.....11

Personality Traits.....11

State Presidents vs. Chapter Officers.....16

Footnotes.....22

Literature Cited.....23

Introduction

Leadership training and recognition of leadership skills has been a cornerstone of the FFA since its inception. The official FFA manual lists leadership development as the first of its aims and purposes.[1] Local FFA chapters as well as regional, area, state, and national organizations regularly conduct leadership training for current and prospective officers.

An FFA member, through his leadership training, has the opportunity to progress from member to chapter officer to state officer and finally to national officer. Current research (cited later), however, seems to indicate that leadership abilities are not the only factor which assist a member to become an officer at the different levels. Together with their leadership skills, each person has certain personality traits that seem to be related to the various functions of a leader.

A question that naturally follows then is: Are certain personality characteristics associated with individuals who hold leadership positions and does the level of leadership reflect particular personality traits?

It is difficult to determine the self-selection factors that are involved in becoming a leader, however, it is commonly believed that different leadership styles and skills are necessary for different types of leadership roles and functions. It appears that certain personality traits are more commonly associated with various leadership offices held. Similarly, certain leadership styles seem to be exhibited by persons having particular personality traits.

In an organization such as FFA which places such high priority on leadership development, information about leader characteristics is pertinent for potentially improving their training programs and advising functions.

Significance of the Problem

The concept of leadership has received much attention over the years in educational, psychological, sociological, and other social science literature. Different approaches to the study of leaders and leadership behavior have been employed which focus variously on personality traits of leaders, characteristics of effective leaders, and behavior of leaders in different types of group settings. Also, several instruments have been developed which attempt to identify the dimensions of leadership behavior.

In the past many studies of leadership have often yielded inconsistent or inconclusive results, perhaps because of the differing definitions of leadership employed, the varying nature of the group situations under study, or the diverse roles and functions that leaders of necessity must perform which are themselves changeable over time and in different situations.

Nevertheless, leadership, as a concept, implies certain behaviors which in turn could be indicative of certain personality tendencies. Alternatively, possession of certain personality traits by leaders, if they are commonly held, might imply that particular personality characteristics are conducive to being a leader. In short, there is some unspoken assumption that a leader is a certain type of person.

FFA is a highly structured youth organization whose goals include, and emphasize, leadership development. Many of its

major activities revolve around leadership training and experiences related to personal development of leadership skills. Although extracurricular, FFA serves an integral advisory function for many youth in vocational education. Thus, it has a substantial impact on a student's life.

Recognizing the importance given to leadership training and development by the FFA, this study was undertaken to address the question of what is the relationship between leadership position attained in FFA and the personality traits of an FFA officer? Knowing the personality traits of current and past FFA officers can provide useful information both for vocational guidance counselors as well as for students having aspirations of becoming officers. This information could serve as a basis for structuring learning experiences that might lead to the development of certain leadership skills and/or styles to suit various leadership roles.

Review of Literature

Many studies have been conducted concerning past FFA members and officers, some of which have touched on leadership. The most recent nationwide study of former FFA leaders was conducted by Lasap (1971) and focused on past national officers. In this study, the degree of leadership was defined as the number of offices held or level of office held - no measure of personality was included.

Some studies have shown that membership in FFA, with its concomitant leadership activities and opportunities for personal

development, seems to have long-term effects on its members. Hampson et al (1977) using a sample of agricultural leaders in Ohio, attempted to determine the leadership and personal development competencies which should be included in a vocational agriculture curriculum. One finding was that approximately one-half (49%) of the leaders in the sample were past officers in FFA and only 38% indicated that they were never affiliated with FFA. A conclusion of the study was that leadership competencies performed in conjunction with FFA activities included in the study were still being performed and were perceived as still being important by the agriculture leaders.

Rathburn (1974) found a significant relationship between level of participation in vocational education student organizations and eventual employment success. Multiple regression analysis showed that length of membership and level of participation in the vocational student organizations were strong predictor variables of employment success.

Other leadership studies have arisen in the context of social psychological studies of group behavior and interpersonal processes. Two distinct approaches were used in early research on leadership - the trait approach and the situational approach. The former sought to identify personality characteristics of leaders in general under the assumption that leadership was a more or less static state of being. The latter approach oriented more to the study of leaders *in situ* to determine leader differences relative to different

settings, tasks, and group organization, assuming that variations in groups along those dimensions demanded differential qualities of the leader.

After much research utilizing strictly one or the other approach and yielding inconsistent and often inconclusive findings, a consolidated view evolved. Fiedler (1958) was an early advocate of combining the trait and the situational approach and his extensive research focused on the differential effectiveness of leaders vis a' vis intra-group structure, task dimensions, and perceived characteristics of the leader by followers. The emphasis shifted from leadership qualities as they exist in a vacuum to those variable qualities required of leaders serving differing functions and roles in varying situations. This placed the concept of traits in the context of group and interpersonal processes.

Shaw (1971) points out that "Individuals bring their personal characteristics with them when they join a group, and these characteristics exert a powerful influence upon group process". Individual characteristics thus compose a personal environment in which the group must operate.

Idem (1964) writes "that the degree to which an individual exhibits leadership depends not only on his characteristics, but also on the characteristics of the situation in which he finds himself". Thus, certain personal characteristics may be conducive for certain leadership functions. For example, a person may become influential in a situation requiring deli-

beration and planning but show little evidence of leadership if a situation demands immediate action with no opportunity for weighing alternatives or thinking things out.

One way to address the issue of which personality traits are associated with various leadership levels or styles is to investigate personality characteristics of known leaders through the use of an instrument such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This instrument is based on Jung's theory of personality and the typology which he has proposed.[2]

In a study by Benedetti (1977) which used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to determine personality traits of young people participating in youth organizations, the following findings were given:

1) Leaders tend to exhibit characteristics related to extroverted, intuitive, and feeling types.

2) Extroversion is significantly related to previous leadership experience for subjects 17-18 years old.

A brief summation and explanation of the traits identified by the Myers-Briggs instrument will clarify these results.

According to Jung's theory (1971), apparent random variation in human behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, and is due to basic differences in the way people prefer to use the personality functions of perception and judgment.

Perception is defined as the process of becoming aware of things, people, occurrences, or ideas. Jung notes two contrasting ways of perceiving: (1) the knowing process of "sensing" by which we become aware of things solely through

our five senses; and (2) the process of "intuition" which occurs through the unconscious and is accompanied by ideas or associations which the unconscious attaches to conscious perception.[3]

The other personality function is "judging", defined as the process of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. There are two distinct ways that exist of coming to these conclusions: one is by the use of "thinking", a logical process aimed at an impersonal finding--a thinking person deals with facts. The other is by use of "feeling", a process of appreciation, or judging things on personal, subjective value.[4]

Knowing which function (sensing or intuition) a person prefers to use in perceiving, and which function (thinking or feeling) he/she prefers to use in making judgments, it is also important to know whether these processes are focused internally or externally. According to Jung, an extravert tends to focus his judgment and perception on the outer world of people and things, while the introvert tends to focus on the inner world of concepts and ideas.[5]

This brief summary of traits identified by Myers-Briggs indicates the relative importance of such [illegible] in leadership analysis and their implications for the trait/situation relationship. An Extraverted (E) type likes to deal with people, preferring public contact over paper work; an Introverted type prefers solitude and concentration. A Sensing (S) type is good with details and routine; an Intuitive (N) type is

good at problem solving, often called the "thinker-upper". A person reporting a Thinking (T) preference is likely to take an impersonal approach while a Feeling (F) type prefers tact and sympathetic handling of people. A person scoring as a Judging (J) type likes to work within a system, whereas a Perceptive (P) type is known for adaptability.

Statement of the Problem

What are the personality traits that characterize leaders in FFA and do these traits differ with the level of leadership held? The specific objectives of this study were:

1) To determine personality traits of FFA officers at both the state and chapter level.
2) To determine personality trait differences between state presidents and chapter officers.

Methodology

Population - The sample consisted of 147 FFA officers from across the United States who attended leadership conferences at the National FFA Center in Alexandria, Virginia during the summer of 1976. Thirty-eight (38) of these officers were state presidents and one hundred nine (109) were chapter officers.

Instrumentation - The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Form F (MBTI) was given to the 147 individuals in the study. The MBTI is a 166 item personality instrument that measures four basic preferences, which, under Jung's theory, structure the

individual's unique personality. Jung (1971) believed that much of the apparent random variation in human behavior is actually consistent and quite orderly, being due to basic differences in the way people prefer to use perception and judgment.

The MBTI contains separate indices for determining each of the four basic preferences:

Index	Preference as Between
EI	Extroverted or Introverted
SN	Sensing or Intuitive
TF	Thinking or Feeling
JP	Judgment or Perception

Myer's (1962) writes that ET, SN, TF, and JP are indices designed to point one way or the other, rather than scales designed to measure traits.

Both Sundberg (1970) and Mendelsohn (1970) reviewed the indicator's reliability. Sundberg's analysis of internal consistency (split-half) reliability studies "show correlations mostly in the .70 and .80 range for continuous scores. These figures are comparable to those of leading personality inventories."

This 166 item instrument takes approximately 45-50 minutes to complete. Each individual receives a score on each trait (Extrovert, Introvert, etc.). From these scores the individual is classified on each index (as being either Extrovert or Introvert, etc.). Each person is also given a preference score which indicates strength of preference.

Analysis - The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) was used to analyze the data, specifically sub-programs frequencies, breakdown and crosstabs. The frequency sub-program was used to determine percentages in the sample that were represented by each personality type. Preference scores were determined with the use of the breakdown sub-program. The crosstabs sub-program was used to determine relationships between selected variables. The level of significance was set at .05.

Results

In order to determine the most common personality traits of FFA officers, each officer was classified into only one of the two categories along each index, (i.e.--an individual would be classified as either being Extroverted or Introverted). Frequency counts were then taken to determine the traits occuring most often. Mean preference scores were also calculated for each group. (See Table 1.) The MBTI produces four preference scores, one for each of the four indices: EI, SN, TF, and JP. The score for each index consists of a letter that shows direction of the preference followed by a number showing its reported strength. For example, a score of E 45 on the EI index would indicate an Extroverted individual who had a preference for Extroversion of 45 on a scale of 1 to 67. (The higher the score the greater the preference.)

Table 1. - Frequencies and preference scores for personality trait indicators of both state presidents and chapter officers participating in training sessions at National FFA Center in the summer of 1976.

	State Presidents			Chapter Officers			Totals	
	Extrovert vs. Introvert							
	N	%	Preference	N	%	Preference	N	%
Extrovert	25	66%	E 22	81	74%	E 24	106	72%
Introvert	13	34%	I 9	28	26%	I 19	41	28%
	38	100%		109			147	
	Sensing vs. Intuitive							
Sensing	19	50%	S 20	81	74%	S 23	100	68%
Intuitive	19	50%	N 16	28	26%	N 17	47	32%
	38			109			147	
	Thinking vs. Feeling							
Thinking	11	30%	T 8	44	40%	T 17	55	37%
Feeling	27	70%	F 15	65	60%	F 16	92	63%
	38			109			147	
	Judging vs. Perceptive							
Judging	20	53%	J 23	68	62%	J 23	88	60%
Perceptive	18	47%	P 15	41	38%	P 18	59	40%
	38			109			147	

Extrovert-Introvert

Seventy-two percent of the total sample were classified as being Extroverted rather than Introverted. When this sample was broken down by office held, 66% of the state presidents and 74% of the chapter officers preferred Extroversion with preference scores of E 22 and E 24 respectively. The remaining state presidents (34%) and chapter officers (26%) preferred Introversion with preference scores of I 9 and I 19 respectively.

This difference in preference scores for Introverts can be seen in figure 1. The chapter officer distribution appears to be bi-modal with a definite group of chapter officers preferring Introversion.

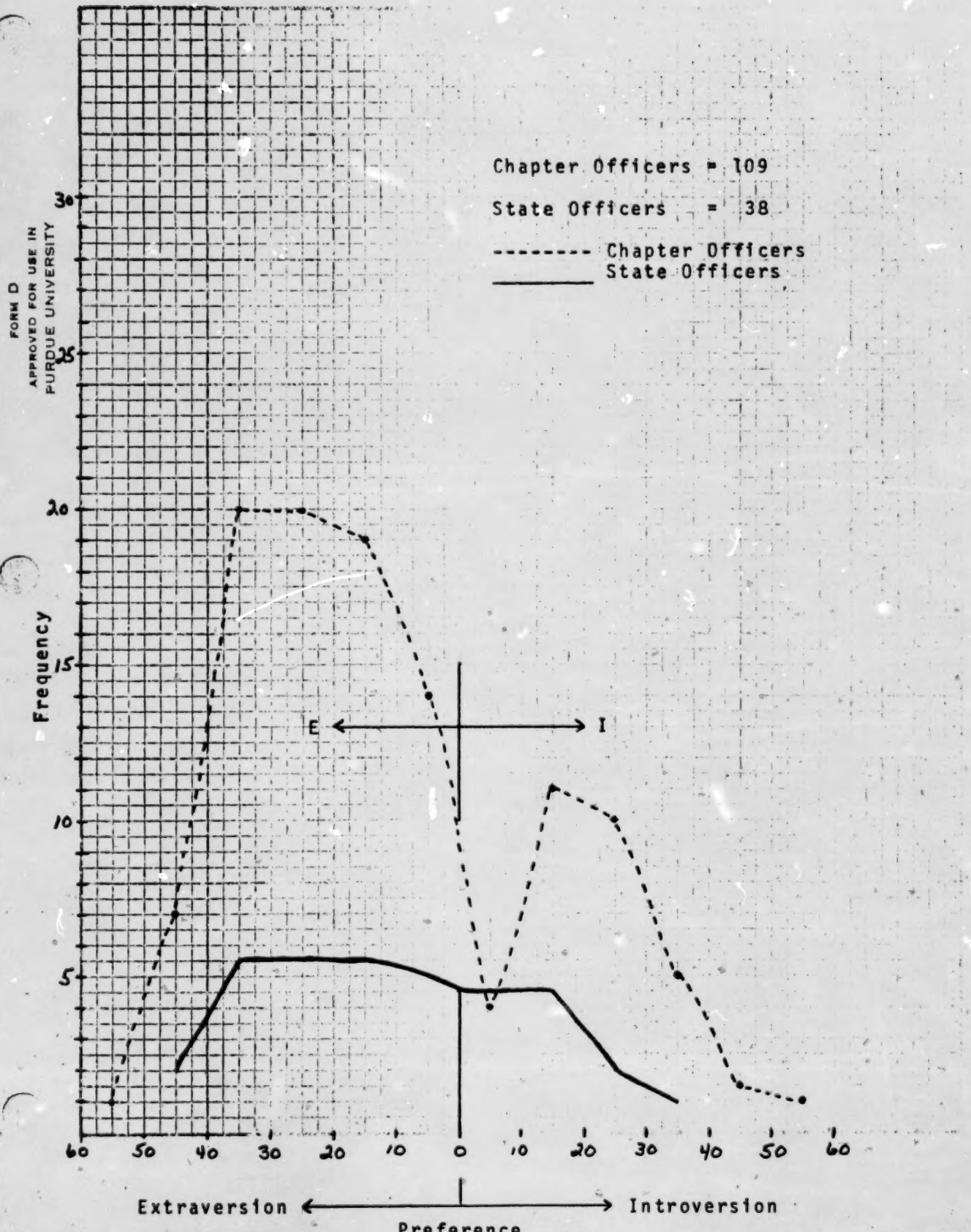
Sensing-Intuitive

Sixty-eight percent of the total sample were classified as being Sensing rather than Intuitive. When this sample was broken down by office held, 50% of the state presidents and 74% of the chapter officers preferred Sensing with preference scores of S 20 and S 23 respectively. The remaining state presidents (50%) and chapter officers (26%) preferred Intuition with preference scores of N 16 and N 17 respectively.

Thinking-Feeling

Sixty-three percent of the total sample were classified as being Feeling rather than Thinking. When this sample was

EI Preference Scores



broken down by office held, 70% of the state presidents and 65% of the chapter officers preferred Feeling with preference scores of F 15 and F 16 respectively. The remaining state presidents (30%) and chapter officers (35%) preferred Thinking with preference scores of T 8 and T 17 respectively.

Judging-Perceptive

Sixty percent of the total sample were classified as being Judging rather than Perceptive. When this sample was broken down by office held, 53% of the state presidents and 62% of the chapter officers preferred Judging with preference scores of J 23 and J 23 respectively. The remaining state presidents (47%) and chapter officers (38%) preferred Perception with preference scores of P 15 and P 18 respectively.

Summary

From the above it can be seen that an FFA officer can generally be characterized as more often being Extroverted, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging.

State Presidents vs. Chapter Officers

In order to answer the question, "How does a state president differ from a chapter officer in regard to personality traits?", the Chi Square statistic was used to determine if there was any relationship between type of office (state president or chapter officer) held and personality traits exhibited.

Extrovert vs. Introvert - State presidents did not significantly differ from chapter officers on the Extrovert-Introvert scale. (See Table 2.)

Sensing vs. Intuitive - A significant Chi Square statistic of 6.58 (prob. = .01) resulted when state presidents and chapter officers were cross-tabulated with the Sensing-Intuitive scale. (See Table 3.) A higher proportion of chapter officers were classified as Sensing than were state presidents (74.3% as compared to 50%). This relationship can be seen graphically in figure 2. The mode of the state officers is on the Intuitive side of the SN index, while the mode for chapter officers is on the Sensing side.

Thinking vs. Feeling - State presidents did not significantly differ from chapter officers on the Thinking-Feeling scale. (See Table 4.)

Judging vs. Perceptive - State presidents did not significantly differ from chapter officers on the Judging-Perceptive scale. (See Table 5.)

Figure 2

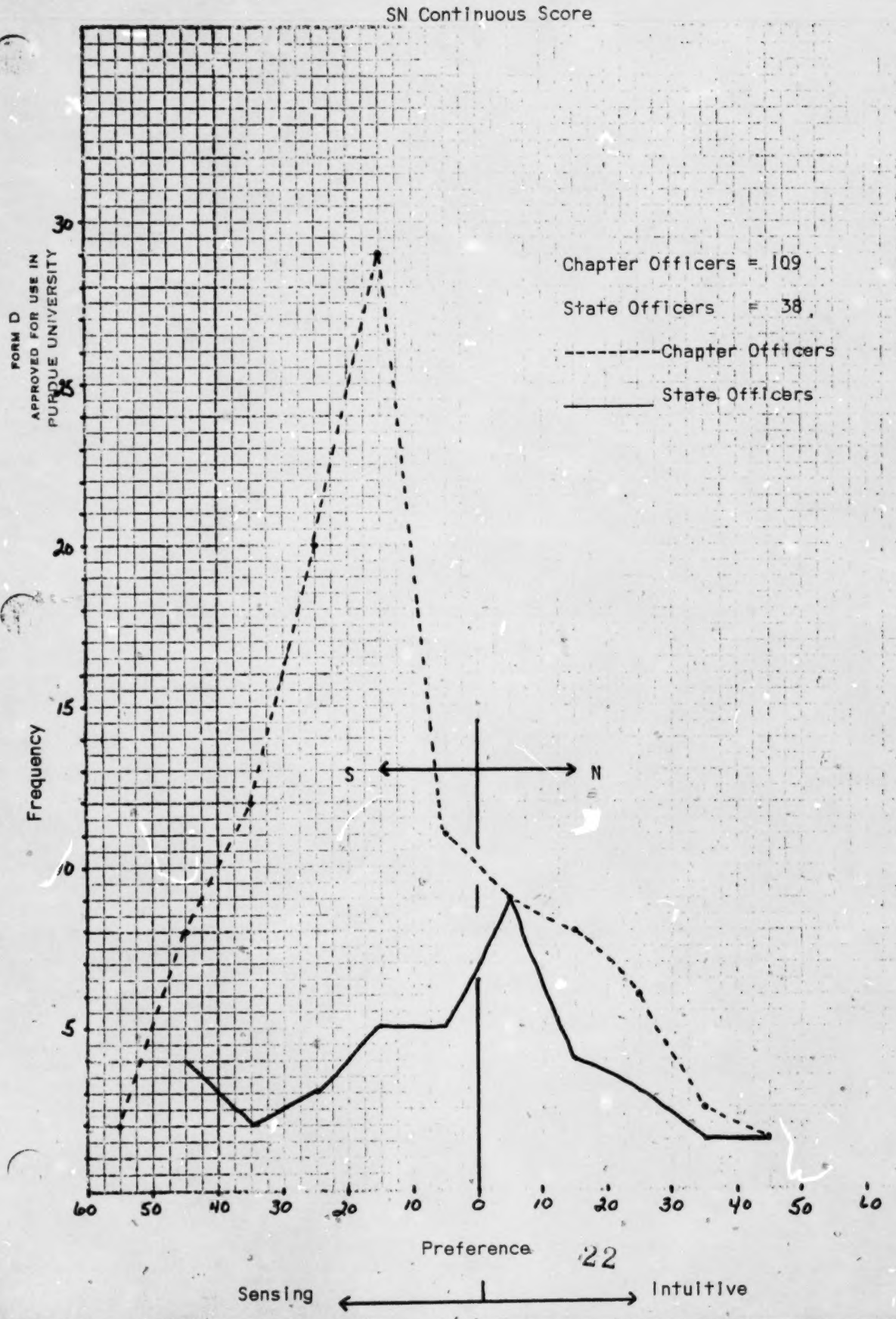

SN Continuous Score
FORM D
APPROVED FOR USE IN
PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Chapter Officers = 109
State Officers = 38
---------Chapter Officers
_____ State Officers
Frequency
30
25
20
15
10
5
S
N
60 50 40 30 20 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Preference
Sensing
Intuitive

Table 2. - Relationship between type of office held (Chapter vs. State) and classification on Extroverted-Introverted Scale.

	Extroverted	Introverted	
State President	O = 25* E = 27	O = 13 E = 11	38
Chapter Officer	O = 81 E = 79	O = 28 E = 30	109
	106	41	147

Chi Square = .64 with 1 degree of freedom.
Significance = .42.

Table 3. - Relationship between type of office held (Chapter vs. State) and classification on Extroverted-Introverted Scale.

	Sensing	Intuitive	
State President	O = 19 E = 26	O = 19 E = 12	38
Chapter Officer	O = 81 E = 74	O = 28 E = 35	109
	100	47	147

Chi Square = 6.58 with 1 degree of freedom.
Significance = .01.

*O = Observed
E = Expected

Table 4. - Relationship between type of office held (Chapter vs. State) and classification on Thinking-Feeling Scale.

	Thinking	Feeling	
State President	O = 11 E = 14	O = 27 E = 24	38
Chapter Officer	O = 44 E = 41	O = 65 E = 68	109
	55	92	147

Chi Square = 1.12 with 1 degree of freedom.
Significance = .29.

Table 5. - Relationship between type of office held (Chapter vs. State) and classification on Judging-Perceptive Scale.

	Judging	Perceptive	
State President	O = 20 E = 23	O = 18 E = 15	38
Chapter Officer	O = 68 E = 65	O = 41 E = 44	109
	88	57	147

Chi Square = .75 with 1 degree of freedom.
Significance = .39.

Conclusions

Personality traits are an important factor in understanding the dimensions of leadership. Identifying personality characteristics of leaders yields insight into the type of person who is most probably in a leadership position. Knowing that certain traits imply certain behavioral tendencies leads to a better understanding of leadership behavior. This information is potentially useful for leadership training such as that provided by the FFA for its members.

To assess personality traits of FFA officers this study utilized the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which also describes the behavioral correlates associated with each dimension of personality based on Jung's typology. Specifically, this study has indicated that FFA officers are more often classified as:

1) Extroverted rather than Introverted: an Extroverted individual likes to deal with people, prefers public contact over paper work, and is more likely to take charge and be open to people and all types of situations.

2) Sensing rather than Intuitive: a Sensing individual is especially good with details and routine, gets things done, and is immediately concerned with events as they happen.

3) Feeling rather than Thinking: a Feeling individual is people-oriented and prefers tact and sympathetic handling of people.

4) Judging rather than Perceptive: a Judging individual likes to work within a system and works well under structure. (As an organization FFA is very structured.)

An FFA chapter officer differs from a state president on only one of the four main dimension, Sensing-Intuitive. A higher proportion of chapter officers were classified as Sensing than were state presidents. This means that a chapter officer is more likely to have a preference for working with detail and routine than does the state officer. The state president would more likely prefer working with ideas or associations and thus be more problem oriented than the chapter officer.

Footnotes

[1] Official FFA Manual, 1977, page 11.

[2] Myers, Isabel Briggs. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1962, page 1.

[3] Myers, Ibid., page 51.

[4] Myers, Ibid., page 52.

[5] Myers, Ibid., page 57.

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